



FEMA

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT A JOB TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY

Bee County, TX - When Dennis DeWitt assumed the role of floodplain administrator for Bee County, he had no idea what duties were attached to the position. He had not been on the job a year when he faced a rude awakening. There was a flood and his response to local residents affected by it was lacking.

Immediately following a flood in 2000, he received a call from a representative of the Governor's Division of Emergency Management. DeWitt identified himself, as floodplain manager, with much confidence. When questioned regarding the issuance of permits to residents in the process of re-building his response was, "I don't know what you are talking about." At that moment he knew he had to become a fast learner.

DeWitt learned that floodplain management involves both corrective and preventative measures for reducing flood damage. He researched information on zoning requirements, building codes, and special-purpose floodplain ordinances. He familiarized himself with the role of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and its floodplain management requirements. He could discuss the Increase Cost of Compliance (ICC) and the Community Assistance Program (CAP) relative to the NFIP.

DeWitt revisited his role. He drafted a series of forms, flyers, and letters. "When we started having problems with flooding I went to the newspaper with this form, which is printed on water-resistant paper. It specifically tells residents what they need to do in a flood event and who they need to contact," De Witt said. The form is given to residents or left on their door.

Another form, the Development Permit Application, has to be completed for any structure being repaired, renovated or improved, if the cost equals or exceeds 50 percent or more of the value of the structure. It is also required for new construction. A multi-purpose form, each resident must list an emergency contact number and become familiar with the floodplain management information, which is included in the form. Flood map number, flood zone, and map date are listed.

Following an on-site visit, a Damage Determination letter is issued to residents affected by a flood. In it, Dewitt lists the percent of structural damage, base flood elevation for the location of the property, an estimated level of the present elevation of the home, zoning, map number, and re-building requirements. A statement regarding NFIP and ICC is also included.

Area residents and newcomers are encouraged to visit with DeWitt. He invites them into the map room and educates them on the location of their property, the base flood elevation (BFE), and discusses flood prevention measures. "I want them to know what they are getting themselves into. I don't try to tell them not to build or re-build in that location."

Trying times characterized the first six months of his new program. He was confronted with resistance from some of the local residents who did not welcome change. DeWitt acquainted them with the guidelines and followed up on compliance. As a result of his perseverance, his floodplain management strategy has proven effective.



**Bee County,
Texas**



Quick Facts

Sector:

Public

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Education/Outreach/Public Awareness

Primary Funding:

Local Sources